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THE RAGTIMER

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SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER

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PUBLISHED BY

THE RAGTIME SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSICAL RAGTIME

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RAGTIME...
UNDER YOUR HAT

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INCORPORATED 1972

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INCORPORATED

is a non-profit corporation having the following objects;

To preserve classical ragtime music and to pursue such other activities as shall serve to maintain and develop interest in classical ragtime music and music related thereto.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

1982

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Editor - Jack Hutton

As you'll note at the bottom of this page, we have finally bowed to rising costs and raised the annual membership to $10, beginning in 1983. For the benefit of our many U.S. members, we'll emphasize that the fee is in Canadian dollars, and is still one of the greatest bargains to be found.

The best way of keeping our per-unit costs down is by increasing our membership, and that's one way that every one of our members can help. If you know of even one colleague at work who might be interested in joining the Ragtime Society, why not suggest it?

Boosting our membership total would be a splendid way to celebrate our 20th anniversary which is now nearing its end.

There 's another way of assisting the Ragtime Society, and that is by sharing news of ragtime events in your area. This combined issue (July-August-September-October) has at least two examples, for which we're very grateful.

Watch shortly for the November-December issue which carries a detailed report on the anniversary Bash.

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THE BIX FESTIVAL

A look at a summer jazz festival

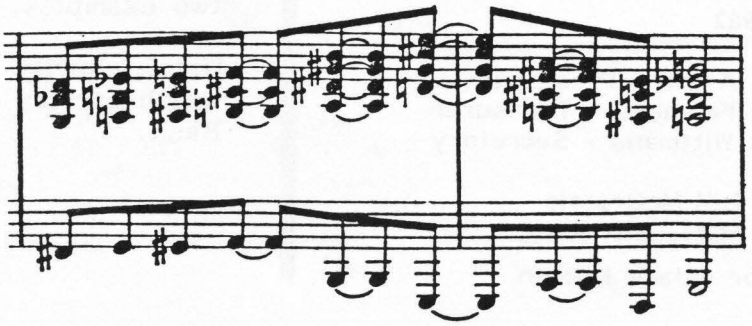
through the eyes

of a ragtime performer

BY JACK HUTTON

Picture the scene with yourself in it. You have travelled a few hundred miles to perform at a jazz festival, knowing months in advance that at some point you will be all alone on a stage in front of thousands of strangers, playing Bix Beiderbecke's tone poem, "In A Mist". The moment has arrived. It's a humid July night . Dressed in too warm formal wear, nerves as taut as a piano string, you wonder whether the 4,000 people you can't see on the other side of the footlights can see that your hands are shaking slightly , and that it's a visible effort to concentrate on what comes next.

Then -- out of nowhere, it seems -- three boys run in front of the outdoor bandshell, yelling at the top of their lungs. "Hey -- YOU!" The shouts come just as you are about to reach for this progression -- one that you've had difficulty in re- memorizing. In that split second during which you thought the shouts were aimed at you, it happens -- PANIC. The thin thread of concentration is cut as neatly as if someone reached out with a pair of scissors. Adrenalin flows like a river. Your mind is a jumble of images, none of them connected with "In A Mist".



Have you ever had one of those nights? It happened to me exactly that way last July on the second night of the Bix Beiderbecke Jazz Festival in Bix's home town, Davenport, Iowa, in front of about 4,000 people a stone's throw from the Mississippi River. What happened? My mind and my hands went into automatic pilot control because, according to a tape I heard the next day, I substituted some Bixish chords for the two-bar turn-around and was right back on track without anyone in the audience aware that anything had happened. In fact, two Bix purists sought me out to say they'd never heard the tune played better. One said she had wept.

PHOTO BY RAGTIME BOB DARCH

ABOVE: The Rainbow Gardens Jazz Orchestra welcomed a cool breeze from the Mississippi during this stint at the Bix Festival. Left to right: Al Bird, cornet; John Sannen, clarinet and alto; Warren Latham (hidden), baritone sax; Gordon Vogt, vocals and drums; Willie Wilson, guitar and banjo; Jack Hutton, piano. Unseen at the right is Ric Giorgi on bass.

That's a zany introduction to one of the many U.S. jazz festivals that you don't read a great deal about in the ragtime press, but which I would heartily recommend to anyone seeking a relaxed weekend that includes hospitality on the banks of the Mississippi River with some fun music. As our seven-piece Rainbow Gardens Jazz Orchestra (the only Canadian group invited out of nine bands) discovered, you could even find ragtime amidst the firewagon Dixieland that most groups played.

Heading for the bar at the opening night reception, we immediately recognized Mike Schwimmer, the celebrated Chicago ragtimer who was about to perform on stage with the Red Rose Ragtime Band. Moments later, we crowded to the front to listen to Joplin's "Original Rags". The band's pianist, Joan Reynolds, was a knock-out -- both visually and to the ears. Immediately, seven Canadian musicians adopted the Chicago group as their musical link for the remainder of the weekend festival.

It's doubtful if any community dedicates itself more seriously to commemorating the memory of a local jazz great than Davenport does. Local citizens were totally familiar with Bix's life story, his tragic and lonely death at 28, and would share stories about his escapades at the drop of a hat. The local papers, particularly the Quad-City Times, devoted many columns to the Bix era while we were there. And, to our amazement, the local advertisers got into the act with Bix sales, special Beiderbecke days and other promotions. Bix's name was used to sell watches, household goods, clothing -- even empty beer cans with a label that read "Bix Beer". That in particular would have tickled his sense of humour.

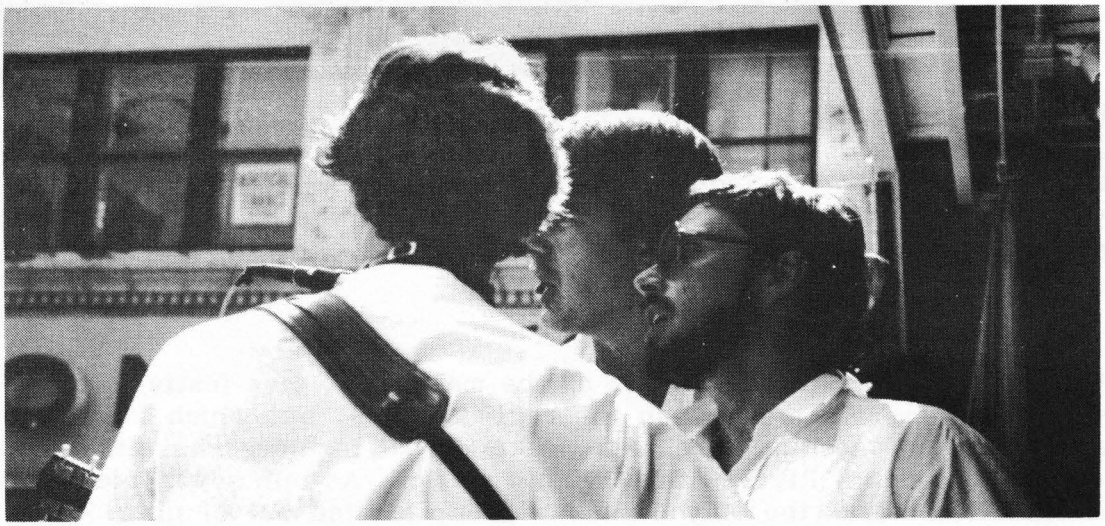
Did Bix Beiderbecke compose ragtime? The inclusion of his four tone poems in David Jasen's 100 Original Rags suggests that the music falls loosely in the era, perhaps under the novelty category, but I'm sure no purist would ever admit that Scott Joplin and Bix Beiderbecke were in the same camp.

Continued on next page

It took Bob Darch, however, to document the fact that Beiderbecke grew up in a hotbed of ragtime. While performing at Davenport's Ramada Inn this summer, Darch placed a tiny ad in the local paper seeking old sheet music that referred to ragtime. (See a local newspaper report in this issue) He was swamped by return calls.

Beiderbecke, who was born in 1903 and died in 1931, is best-known for his cornet, but ragtimers have been drawn to his four tone poems that are an intriguing mix of many influences. Darch's research reveals that ragtime was definitely one of those influences. Whenever Bix sat down at a piano, it was obvious that he listened to a lot of novelty rags (compare his piano on "Big Boy")

Next summer's Bix Festival is scheduled for the weekend of July 28-31, with a Thursday evening cocktail party (July 28) kicking it off. Bands alternate between playing on a riverboat (it was a mind-boggling experience for us to play "Mississippi Mud" on the Mississippi itself), playing outdoor concerts at the Bix Bandshell and playing on a float in mid-town. Because our group specializes in the music of the 1920's and 1930's, particularly Bix arrangements which we lift off the old records, playing in Bix's home town was an especially moving experience. Therefore, we'd recommend it to anyone who has an ear for that era.

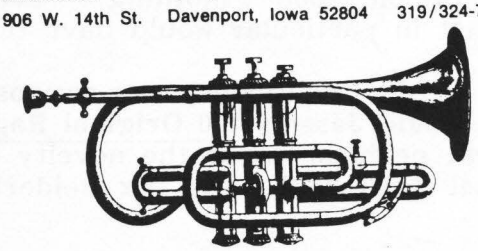


Willie Wilson, Gordon Vogt and Al Bird recreating Bing Crosby and the Rhythm Boys

Ragtime purists will miss the solo piano acts that one finds at some of the U.S. ragtime festivals. Last summer, our group was the only exception because I played solo piano for 15 or 20 minutes of our longer sets, allowing the other six musicians to take a welcome break in the July heat. The audiences, who were invariably very knowledgeable about what they were hearing, seemed to react well to a combination of ragtime ("Ragtime Nightingale", "Elite Syncopations" and "Maple Leaf Rag" were favorites) with Waller and James P. stride ("Caprice Rag" and "Handful of Keys" always got healthy applause). And, it being Eubie's 100th year, I used the occasion of playing before a dinner audience at Rock Island's Sheraton Hotel to play a medley of his tunes as a special tribute.

Any ragtimer who doesn't mind tolerating a healthy dose of Dixieland for the sake of finding some ragtime nuggets would enjoy this festival. If you want to learn more, write to ...

The Bix Beiderbecke Memorial Society
Dedicated to the perpetuation of the legend of Bix.
906 W. 14th St. Davenport, Iowa 52804 319/324-7422



Bix's girlfriend relives memories

By Shirley Davis
Woman's editor

Vera Cox Korn, a woman who once dated Bix Beiderbecke, talks with Brigitte Berman, who produced a documentary on the jazz great's short life. (Times photo)

She left the theater with twinkling eyes, and a tear.

Vera Cox Korn of Davenport had just seen herself as a star of sorts in a movie about a shy boy she once dated, and during the premiere public showing Friday in Davenport she laughed, and reminisced about the long-ago days when she was Bix Beiderbecke's girlfriend.

The movie flickered back memories of their dating days, and after it was over she joked about how true the film was, how music was his entire life — even in their dating days — and how he would sometimes "forget about her" on a date and end up playing the piano all night.

After the showing, she hugged Brigitte Berman, who produced and directed the documentary called "Ain't None of Them Play Like Him Yet." The movie plays again today at 2, 4:30 and 7 p.m. at the Capitol, Davenport.

"Very well done," she said, patting the producer's hand, and frankly admitting that she was worried about what comments from her they would use in the film, what would be cut. "Frankly, I sort of forgot what I'd said."

Mrs. Korn, now 78, has a book of memories of growing up with Bix. "Whenever he'd come home, we'd see each other and pick up where we left off. We were good friends."

In later years, Vera — now a widow — married Ferd Korn, of Korn Bakeries.

Her son, Dr. John C. Korn, a Davenport podiatrist, will see the film today. He's a devoted Bix fan, too, and Mrs. Korn recalls that the last time she saw Bix was when she came back to Davenport from her home in Pella, Iowa, for a visit and Bix came over to see her new baby, John.

She remembers that visit with some sadness. "Bix was discouraged and was not well. He told me he had reached his peak and could see nothing ahead."

The Korns were living in Pella, Iowa, when Bix died in New York. She did not come home to Davenport for the funeral.

She recalls growing up with Bix. "We were in the same grade in Tyler School, and we went to Davenport High School together." Bix left Davenport High as a junior to attend Lake Forest Academy — where he didn't last long.

"We went ice skating together at VanderVeer Park, and we'd go to dances," she said. "He didn't like to dance, though; he'd rather play the piano. He'd sometimes forget I was there, particularly if there were any free instruments on the stand. He'd always ask to play them. He'd play clarinet, cornet, drums, piano — almost anything."

A man leaving the Capitol Theater recognized Mrs. Korn and asked if she ever thought what might have been if she had married Bix Beiderbecke. The question embarrassed her. She didn't answer.

Last summer's Bix Beiderbecke Festival featured the first public showing of a two-hour documentary movie on the life of the jazz cornetist, created over the last four years as a labour of love by Toronto film producer Brigitte Berman, seen above with 78-year-old Vera Cox Korn, a high school girlfriend of Bix's. Brigitte's success in interviewing many of Bix's friends, including composer Hoagie Carmichael, leads a ragtimer to wonder what would have happened if another film-maker had embarked on a similar venture to interview Scott Joplin's widow, Lottie, and others before it became too late to do so. Even now it would be a worthwhile project if a ragtime-oriented film producer set out to interview those with first-hand knowledge of a ragtime era that is seeming more remote with each passing year.

All seven members of the Rainbow Gardens Jazz Orchestra were on hand for the first showing of the Bix two-hour movie. And, despite the problems of an ancient projector , they have a unanimous verdict: don't miss seeing the movie if you have a chance to do so. If you've ever wondered how "In A Mist" came to be written, you'll learn the answer from someone who was there.

WANTED: SHEET MUSIC, large size, pre-1920. Must say "Rag" or "Blues" on cover. Phone R. Darch 386-1940

Ragtime's super sleuth hunts tunes

He's searching out our great old jazz pianist-composers

Bob Darch holds a tune written for the Davenport Elks. (Times photo)

By Jim Arpy
of the Times

Bop Darch has been haunting antique stores in a search for ragtime sheet music, and in the process has discovered a number of turn-of-the-century tunes written by Quad-Citians.

Through dogged detective work and poring over old city directories, the Newtonia, Mo. resident has been able to peek into the lives of some early area composers.

"It's literally like reaching into the tomb and resurrecting them," he says.

Darch, a dedicated history buff and top ragtime pianist, has just concluded an appearance at the Ramada Inn, Davenport. He'll resume his musical research here in three weeks when he returns to the motel for another engagement.

Seeking out tattered sheets of ragtime music in each town he plays, and trying to learn something of the locals who composed some of it, is a compelling off-duty hobby for Darch.

BUT THE man who can discourse on the history of his music for hours also has other reasons.

"Many wrote some good ragtime tunes that never became well-known. I just don't think the composers should go unrecognized. If I can find something that has faded in memory and call it to community attention, I feel that's a worthwhile civic thing," Darch says.

WHENEVER he finds evidence of a ragtime composer who published several tunes, Darch searches for his grave and initiates efforts to erect a suitable tombstone . . . "not just some little stone, but something big and worthwhile on which his accomplishments are listed," he says.

"There are ragtime nuts in every community who will help me do this," Darch smiles.

A CLASSIFIED ad in the Quad-City Times, asking for persons with early ragtime sheet music to contact him, brought "fantastic" responses, Darch says, and area antique stores yielded other finds.

His discoveries also put him on the trail of one Lee B. Grabbe of Davenport, whose obscure career Darch was able to trace through city directories from 1881, when he was a barber, to 1909, by which time he had been, successively, a music teacher, band leader, composer of music, and music publisher.

Grabbe, Darch learned, wrote and published many ragtime songs and instrumental arrangements. One, "The Jolly Corks," was apparently written in 1901 for the Davenport Elks Club.

" 'Jolly Corks' was always the name for the Elks' barroom where no women were allowed," Darch says.

Checking with club officials, Darch learned that Grabbe was its No. 2 charter member and, apparently, its second Exalted Ruler.

Grabbe also wrote "The St. Louis Rag — Two Step," evidently, Darch says, in honor of the St. Louis House, which still exists as one of Davenport's oldest taverns.

Ragtime composers commonly dedicated their tunes to institutions or individuals. One area manuscript Darch found honored, "our cook."

Darch, who has played all of the tunes he's found in the area, says Grabbe's "Ragtime Jimmy" was very good, "the kind you'd like to listen to in the park and hear again and again."

WHEN THE updated version of the book, "They All Played Ragtime," to which Darch is a contributor, is published, he'll include some of Grabbe's tunes and as much biographical material as possible.

Other research produced a 1901 tune by Horace Huron of Rock Island. It's a comic topical song titled "It Don't Cut Any Figure in the Case," and Darch find the lyrics tongue-pleasing.

Huron was also listed on the sheet as the composer of "Brush the Frowns Away," "Orange Blossoms," "Bye Baby Bye Lo," and others that never gained wide popularity. Darch says it was common for a composer to print locally only 1,000 copies of a song.

EARLY SHEET music covers often carried the numeral "5," which meant they sold for "five nickels," or 25 cents.

Darch also found the work of another area composer, E.P. Severin, owner of a Moline music company. His 1902 song, "Peanuts Frolic," is described as a "characteristic march-two-step."

Severin is also identified as the composer of "Kentucky-Korn-Kracker," a cake-walk and two-step.

Another Moline composer, G.N. Benson, produced "The Automobile Two-Step" in 1900. Darch found the sheet music in an antique store.

"It was common for them to write tunes about things in their area, even factories. For instance, among Benson's tunes is 'Plow City March,' an obvious reference to Moline's farm implement industry." he says.

"There were a lot of musicians and composers in this area and researching all of them calls for a massive effort, but it should be done."

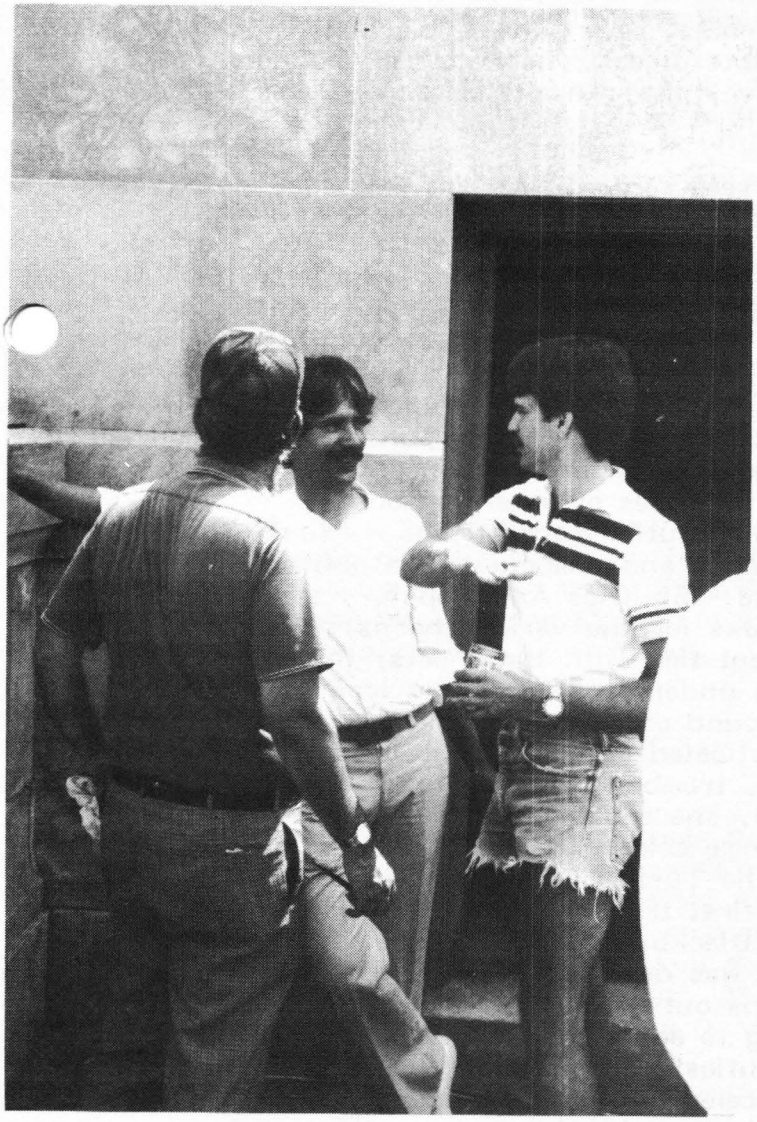
AROUND the turn of the century, any town large enough to boast a railroad depot also had a music or piano store. Most had house musicians, many of whom composed ragtime tunes, hoping to emulate the success of Missouri's legendary Scott Joplin. Few ever hit the bigtime, however.

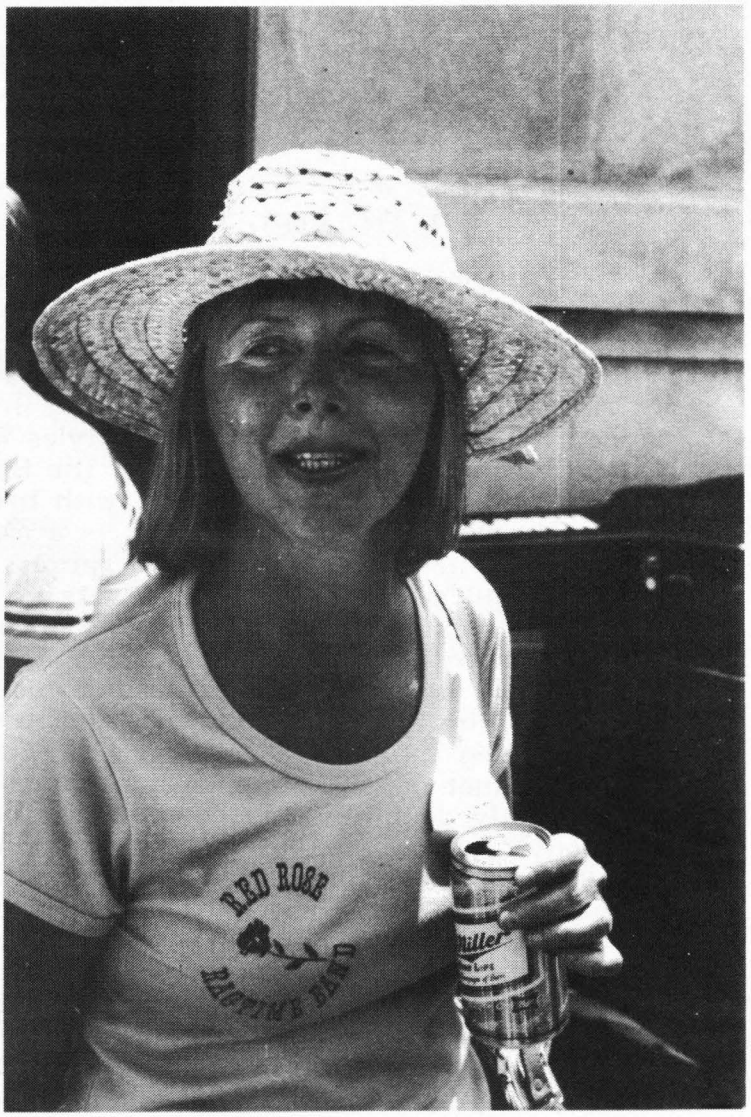
Darch is familiar with researching old tunes. He evaluates ragtime sheet music collections for Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn., and for Scott Joplin Memorial Hall, Sedalia, Mo.

Most manuscripts, or sheets, had colorful, finely-illustrated covers. Darch says this helped to sell them, as did catchy titles like, "We Rubbed Garlic on the Baby So We Could Find Him in the Dark."

It's the thought of all those lost ragtime tunes gathering dust that keeps Darch sleuthing wherever he goes.

This article appeared in the Quad-City Times.





WHEN RAGTIMERS GET TOGETHER ... Relaxing between sets at the Bix Beiderbecke Jazz Festival this past July were Mike Schwimmer of the Red Rose Ragtime Band, Willie Wilson of the Rainbow Gardens Jazz Orchestra and John Otto of the Red Rose band (left photo); and Joan Reynolds, a fine ragtime pianist with the Red Rose Ragtime Band.

RECORD REVIEW

by
TEX
WYNDHAM

Stomp Off S.O.S. 1018 "Two-Step Ball", by The Red Wing Blackbirds Ragtime Band

Selections: Grizzly Bear, Uncle Jasper's Jubilee, The Honolula Rag, Everybody's Doin' It Now, Peaches And Cream, The Bird's Ball, Haunting Rag, San, Red Wing, The Turkey Trot, Bubbles, Dusty Rag, Shuffles and Taps, Porcupine Rag, Southern Beauties, Car-Barlick-Acid, The Coon Band Parade.

Personnel: Dick Roberts, John Barath, cornets; Sam Dunkel, clarinet; Jim Tanner, trombone; Karen Groth, flute/piccolo; Larry Mesic, baritone horn; Tom McCoy, piano; Greg McCurty, tuba; Charlie Morano, drums; Ira Getter, orchestral bells.

Available @ $8.98 postpaid, plus $2.00 overseas, from Stomp Off Records, P.O. Box 342, Dept. L, York, Pennsylvania 17405.

Utilizing a library of over 300 vintage stock arrangements (modified to fit the available instrumentation by omitting violin/viola parts, assigning cello voice to baritone horn, etc., tastefully creating an appealing combination of palm-court orchestra and concert-in-the-park brass band), The Red Wing Blackbirds Ragtime Band has, since its founding in April, 1980, been keeping alive the vigorous spirit of rag-era dance styles in its home stomping grounds of Poughkeepsie, New York. This cross-section of the Blackbirds' repertoire concentrates on rags, rag songs and cakewalks, with brief glimpses of other period paraphernalia ("The Bird's Ball" -- a mellow, fluttery schottische; "San" -- a pseudo-Eastern pop replete with rattles, gongs and tambourine; "Bubbles" -- a lightweight march rendered with lots of bite; "Shuffles And Taps" -- a jaunty but frothy buck dance piled high with breaks for the various horns), delivered with zest by a crew that obviously has spent time with the charts, that dug into them, and that easily communicates its understanding of and love for the music. The Blackbirds' cheerful snappy sound and crisp attack carry you right along through the relatively unsophisticated orchestrations (flute/piccolo and clarinet usually doubling a counterline, trombone and baritone horn frequently doubling a spare semi-bass part, snare drum often accenting the melody), and when the arranger built in some colour changes (splendid syncopated call-response in the B and C strains of "The Turkey Trot"; similar back-and-forth on "Peaches And Cream"; clarinet lead on first trio to "Dusty Rag" followed by a full ensemble ride-out), or when the Blackbirds elect to take advantage of the fact that the doubling in the stocks was designed to allow for differing instrumental combinations (snare often drops out in favour of orchestral bells the first time through the trio, re-entering to add punch to the finale; all kinds of things going on in "Southern Beauties", an already rousing ride capped by a decision to ritard for, and accelerate during, the last chorus), the results are simply irresistible. I could nit-pick a bit because the opening tracks don't show as much attention to dynamics and to tossing the lead/other voicings throughout the band as do the later cuts, but the program does build well as it goes, emerging as a session of band ragtime that's easy to grasp, easy to like, and worth buying.

Music Masters 20033 "Sweet Sixteenths: A Ragtime Concert", piano solos by William Albright

Selections: Mississippi Rag, Gladiolus Rag, Euphonic Sounds, Ragtime Nightingale, Peace And Plenty Rag, Charleston Rag, Slippery Elm Rag, Dizzy Fingers, Sweet Sixteenths, Brass Knuckles.

Available @ $7.75, plus $1.60 per order ($3.00 non-U.S.A. for one or two albums, 50¢ each thereafter) for shipping, from Music Masters, 14 Park Road, Tinton Falls, New Jersey 07724. Musical Heritage Society records (see text of review below) are also available from this address at this price.

Society members who've attended Bashes regularly know that Bill Albright has the technique of a concert pianist, the training and breadth of a musical academician, and a deep feeling for ragtime -- an unbeatable combination. He turns it all loose on a program that encapsulates the entire field of rag in ten titles: the earliest, cakewalky, banjo-plucking strutters ("Mississippi Rag" -- jaunty, bouncing, percussive); classic midwestern compositions ("Euphonic Sounds" comes on more strongly than usual in a rendition with plenty of backbone); East Coast cutting-contest stompers (Bill eases his otherwise close rein for "Charleston Rag", as he really swings and steams); novelty finger-busters (Confrey's virtually unsyncopated top-speed exercise "Dizzy Fingers" sounds raggier than it is via judicious accents in the melody line); and contemporary contributions to the genre (Albright's delicate Lamb-esque "Sweet Sixteenths" and the fierce Albright-Bolcolm collaboration on "Brass Knuckles"). Performance is per the published score, distinctively and aptly personalized via choice of touch and phrasing (e.g. fluttery bird evocation on second trio of the beautiful "Ragtime Nightingale"), loping broken-octave bass, and right-hand additions of grace notes and anticipations. A solid LP that will be especially enjoyed by ragophiles who miss the concert-hall-style recordings that were so easy to locate during the early-70's Joplin craze.

In the same envelope with my review copy of "Sweet Sixteenths", the postman brought Musical Heritage Society MAS 4022 "Ragtime Back To Back", a collection of piano solos by Albright and William Bolcom. This a reissue of The University of Michigan School of Music SM004, to which gave high marks in the November-December 1978 edition of this column. If you missed it then, consider picking it up when you order "Sweet Sixteenths".

Stomp Off S.O.S. 1017 "Don't Say Good-Bye, Miss Ragtime", by Ian Whitcomb and Dick Zimmerman.

Selections: When Ragtime Rosie Ragged The Rosary; Settle Down In A One Horse Town; Emma Louise; *Pink Poodle; Donegal Bay; The Kipling Walk; #Marzipan; I've Got My Eye On You; Who's Been Playin' Papa 'Round Here While I've Been Gone?; Halfway To Heaven; * Bittersweet; I Go So Far With Sophie And Sophie Goes So Far With Me; Someday Somebody's Gonna Get You; The Loves of Yesterday; *New Orleans Hop Scop Blues; Don't Say Goodbye, Miss Ragtime.

* Piano solo by Dick Zimmerman #Piano solo by Ian Whitcomb

Personnel: Ian Whitcomb, vocal/ukulele/tiple/ piano; Richard Zimmerman, piano; Willis Masonheimer, tuba.

Available @ $8.98 postpaid, plus $2.00 overseas, from Stomp Off Records, P.O. Box 342, Dept. L, York, Pennsylvania 17405.

Ragtimers will take special note of the four piano solos on S.O.S. 1017 (Charles L. Johnson's "Pink Poodle" is given a particularly outstanding, full-bodied, highly decorated ride) and the five non-rag songs from the pens of ragtime composers (Henry Lodge's "Donegal Bay", a lightweight ditty; Clarence Woods' comic "Who's Been Playing Papa 'Round Here While I've Been Gone?"; Carey Morgan's boogieish "Someday Somebody's Gonna Get You" in a hard-edged version that's one of the disc's high spots; J. Russell Robinson's sentimental "Halfway To Heaven" and reflective "The Loves Of Yesterday", the latter another winner, both romantic and slyly funny). The balance of this mostly successful platter resurrects forgotten pops of the ragtime and early jazz years, usually giving them a well-wrought setting and an upbeat, music-hall optimism. The Maple Leaf Club's Dick Zimmerman backs Whitcomb's thin-toned, amiable vocals with inviting sing-a-long piano-roll tickling, and when Masonheimer joins in for added oomph, as on the punchy "Emma Louise", their music bounces by in a vein not dissimilar to that of the St. Louis Ragtimers. There are a couple of misfires here (the fast pace of "When Ragtime Rosie Ragged The Rosary" blurs the lyric's gags), but a lot of bull's-eyes, making up a worthwhile buy for period pop-song fanciers.

WANTED! More readers like H. J. Augel

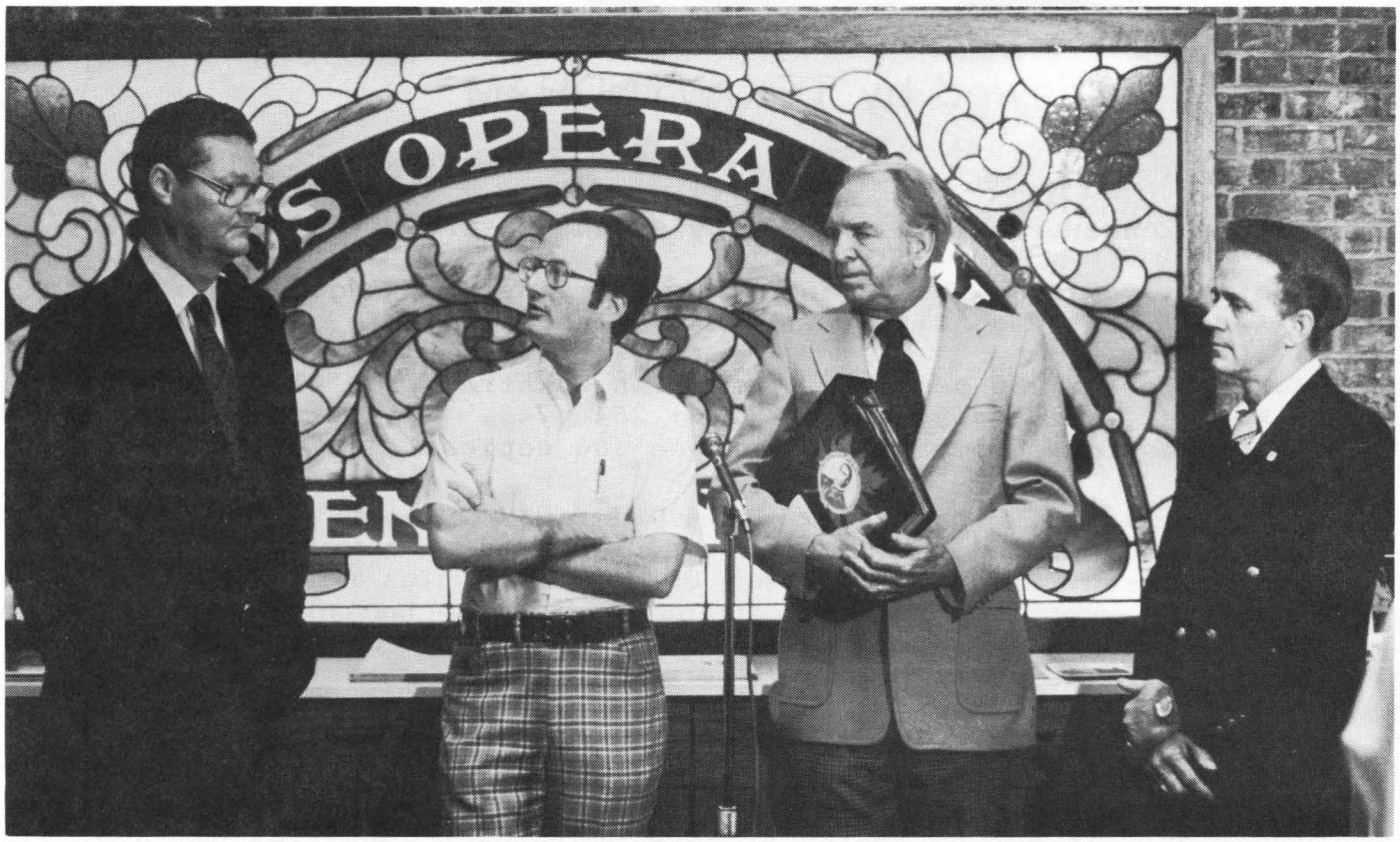
Across the page you will see a picture and report on a U.S. stamp that will honour Scott Joplin in 1983. We are able to share that with you solely because of the initiative of one our Ragtimer readers, H.J. Augel. He thought of the Ragtime Society publication as soon as he heard about the stamp and wrote directly to the Sedalia Chamber of Commerce to get the full background.

We hope that more of you won't hesitate to use your publication to share ragtime news. It could be a local article that others wouldn't see outside that newspaper's circulation area. It could be a brief report on a ragtime event that you've just seen or heard. If you feel strongly about something you've just read in this publication -- pro or con -- put it on paper and we'll be happy to print it. If you're looking for a piece of ragtime sheet music and having no luck, tell us about it. It's more than likely that another ragtimer has it.

As we keep saying, this is your publication. Take advantage of it!

Jack Hutton

THESE FOUR MEN ARE DISCUSSING A STAMP HONOURING SCOTT JOPLIN!



Watch for a U.S. postage stamp commemorating Scott Joplin to be issued some time in 1983. We are indebted to ragtimer H.J. Augel who sent us the photograph above, plus other information about the stamp. In fact, he was one of the first Ragtimer readers to hear about the special stamp and wasted no time in telling us.

The people in the photograph above are, left to right, United States Representative Ike Skelton, Joplin Commemorative Stamp Chairman Scott Allen, State Fair Community College Chairman Bill Hopkins, and Sedalia Postmaster Frank Chapman.

Mr. Augel wrote to the Sedalia Chamber of Commerce as soon as he heard that the Joplin stamp was being considered, and also contacted us. He tells us that Sedalia's Joplin Commemorative Stamp Committee developed the proposal with letters of support from throughout the United States to encourage the United States Postal Service Stamp Advisory Committee to issue a Joplin commemorative stamp. Representative Skelton returned the proposal to the citizens of Sedalia to be on permanent display at the Scott Joplin Archives at the State Fair Community College (which explains why all those gentlemen are standing together).

A tip of the Ragtimer to reader Augel for sharing that with us! We hope that other ragtimers won't hesitate to share ragtime news with us. As we keep saying, that's what your publication is all about.

SHEET MUSIC

Reviewed by TEX WYNDHAM

"Eight Concert Rags", composed by Brian Dykstra

Contents: Cairo, Salt Creek Township, Pensive, Raggedy Blue Romp, A Real Fast Rag, Little Wild One, Wondering Where, Just Beginning.

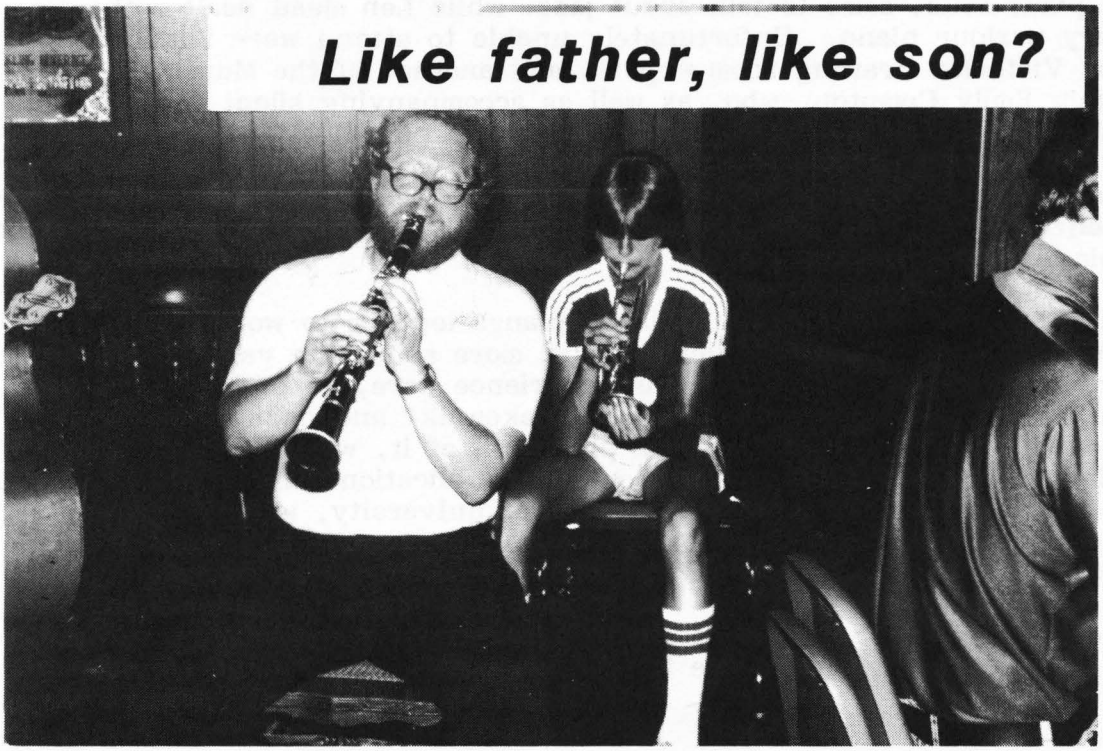
Available @ $7.50 postpaid from Brian Dykstra, 1529 Cleveland Road, Wooster, Ohio 44691, phone (216) 264-4745. Initial edition available for public sale comprises 100 copies.

Society members who witnessed Brian Dykstra's appearances at the Bash in past years will remember that he interspersed his graceful performances of rag classics with some of his own ambitious and technically demanding "concert rags", in which strains of ragtime -- harmonized with advanced and often dissonant chords -- were surrounded and connected by passages of contemporary "legitimate" pianistics. The raggish portions extend ragtime in an interesting way (such as the dense clusters of "Cairo", the thick walking blues bass of "Raggedy Blue Romp"'s second theme and the jangling stacked-fourth left-hand stride that supports the opening motif to "Little Wild One"), and could be handled by a pianist whose technique, if not up to the professional-level novelties of, e.g., Rube Bloom and Arthur Schutt, is at least equal to the more difficult midwestern material (say, James Scott). The non-rag elements are frankly beyond my comprehension, as they will be to anyone without a truly advanced grasp of classical piano, but for what it's worth, I found them generally too long, unfocussed, pretentious and not worth the frustration I experienced in twice fighting my way through each selection for this review (naturally, I liked "Pensive", the shortest and most like a rag, and gave lowest marks to the taxing and baffling "Wondering Where"). You'll need to know your way around the keyboard, plus have an appreciation for horizons beyond the borders of ragtime land, if you're really going to have a good time with this folio.

"The Poltergeist" (9 pages, $3.50) and "Dream Shadows" (6 pages, $3.00), composed by William Bolcom

Available separate at above prices. Published by Edward B. Marks Music Corporation, 1790 Broadway, New York, New York 10019. Distributed by Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp., Melville, New York 11747.

If you can get comfortable with the foregoing Dykstra manuscripts, you probably will have some fun with these two very hard, appealing, rag-flavored, modern descriptive pieces which, together with Bolcom's previously published "Graceful Ghost Rag", make up an interrelated set titled "Three Ghost Rags". The "Poltergeist", characterized as a "rag fantasy", hangs a playful, spritely two-handed figure over implied rhythm in the first strain, moves to a spirited (no pun intended), eccentrically-harmonized syncopated march in the second and to a kind of fun-house-mirror distorted riff in the trio, building through the last three pages to vigorous variations and recapitulations of earlier notions, all in six and seven flats. "Dream Shadows" is a tighter, slower, insinuating, misty glide in C and F, surrounding a spare, fairly conventional, funky trio with three themes sneaking around over a bass that'll have a lot of ticklers straining to articulate these crunching three-or-four-note chords, the top and bottom a tenth apart, that form the downbeats of a gentle stride. "Dream Shadows", my preference, is closer to a standard rag than "The Poltergeist" and thus might be more accessible to a ragtimer who did not have thd guidance provided by Paul Jacobs' recording, on Nonesuch D-79006, of all three of Bolcom's "Ghost Rags".



Ragtimers in the vicinity of Toledo, Ohio, enjoy the music of the Cakewalkin' Jass Band which is led by clarinetist Ray Heitger, seen above with his son, Duke, in a late night jamming session at the Bix Beiderbecke Jazz Festival. One of Ray Heitger's records, "Shake That Thing", features ragtimer Mike Montgomery on piano, backing up Ray on clarinet and the tuba player from the Cakewalkin' band.

Ragtime news from England -- and Czechoslovakia!

Dear Ragtimer Editor:

Seeing Neville Dickie, one of our patrons, mentioned in the Ragtimer prompted me to write about ragtime here at the British Piano Museum.

Some years ago, Vladimir Klusak, the brilliant young ragtime pianist from Prague, visited the Museum and played "Maple Leaf Rag" with great elan to one of our weekend tours. Since then, ragtime and jazz rolls have often been played at our various roll concerts.

At the end of 1980, a young man and his father began to visit the Museum with enthusiastic regularity. As well as being helpers, they both turned out to be interested in ragtime, and Francis, the son, sat down and played to us one evening after closing.

His playing was such that we decided to combine his talents with those of some of the Museum's other musical friends and those of our "Resident Artists" -- our piano roll collection. Their concert was given in 1981 and was called "Piano Styles". John Farrell, well-known for his Ragmaster and Jazzmaster piano rolls, came to talk about jazz, while Len Mead dealt with contemporary parlour piano. Unfortunately unable to attend were Patricia Carroll, the Victorian drawing room expert, and another of the Museum's "discoveries", Emily Compton, who, as well as accompanying silent films in the 1920's, made some piano rolls in London, which were played at the concert. Meanwhile, Francis dealt with ragtime, having made for the occasion a transcription for the Duo-Art piano of a Deo-Welte-Mignon roll of "Haunting Rag" by Lenzburg, in which he revued the original's erratic pedalling, phrasing and dynamics.

Francis' interests in pianos and player pianos led him to work here over the summer period, not least in order to learn more about the various pianos and systems here, and in thanks for his experience here, he composed a ragtime piece which he called "Doc Holland's Cakewalk" and dedicated to me! He explained that he intended to make a piano roll of it, which he is currently doing, and has produced a manuscript copy for publication through the Museum. He is presently continuing his English studies at university, while still piano roll playing and preparing for another concert here this season on dance music, in which ragtime will again figure.

So, despite ragtime's somewhat passing vogue in Europe for the beginning of this century, it is here to stay at the Piano Museum!

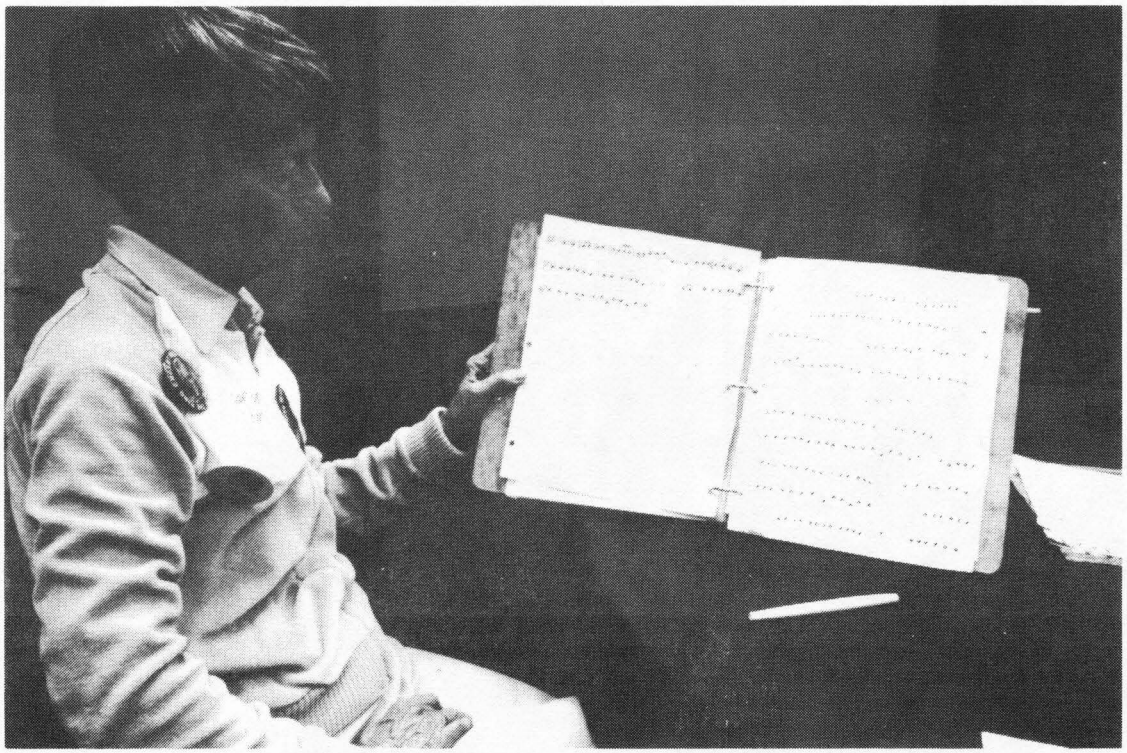
Frank W. Holland, MBE FIMIT
Founder (1963) and Director

FOOTNOTE: Frank Holland generously invites any Ragtime Society members to include a visit to The Musical Museum (its official name) in any trip to England, but cautions them to phone or write to make sure someone is there. The address: 368 High Street, Brentford, Middlesex, TW8 OBD, England. The phone number: 01-560 8108.

Frank Holland sent along with his report about The Musical Museum this picture of Czechoslovakian ragtimer Vladimir Klusak, taken on Sunday afternoon, Aug. 31, 1969, when he visited the Museum. Actually, it's a photostat and may not reproduce well, but we'll share it anyway. The news release on the event said: "By request, Vladimir played Scott Joplin's 'Maple Leaf Rag', complete and perfect in every detail. The applause from over 50 visitors left no doubt that he is outstanding at piano playing of this fine old style -- so popular and distinctive in its heyday as it is again in selective quarters today. He wished to hear other piano roll recordings by Fats Waller etc. from our archives. He is gifted with the art of being able to memorize these tunes after hearing them, and also from watching the piano keys operating from the paper music rolls. After his holiday in England, he is returning to Czechoslovakia to continue studying mechanical engineering in Prague Technical University. As an amateur he plays piano solos or ragtime music in jazz clubs in Prague. Whilst with us, he learned in an hour or two the "Frog Legs Rag" by James Scott."

Looking at the picture of Vladimir Klusak playing a Hupfield 'Animatic'Clavitist" player piano at the Museum, one cannot help wondering where he is today and whether he continues to play ragtime in today's Czechoslovakia. Drop a line to the Ragtimer if you can update us. And thanks to Frank Holland whom we hope to visit some day.

GLORIA EKROM



The profile below was written after the 1981 Bash.

How many who attended last October's Ragtime Bash realized while listening to Gloria Ekrom at the piano that the pianist/collector/historian from Seattle, Washington, was barely able to use her left arm weeks earlier because of heart trouble?

Or, for that matter, how many fellow members of the Ragtime Society know that a dog bite years ago detoured Gloria into a hobby that has made her one of this continent's most respected specialists in early popular music and sheet music?

"Look at this finger," said Gloria during a break in the Bash program. "That's where I was bitten one day just after World War II. The bite (on her right middle finger) meant I had to give up my dreams about a career as a classical pianist because I couldn't span the notes properly anymore. I was taking physical therapy from a local doctor, and I still remember what he said one day. 'I never did like classical music,' he said. 'Why don't you take up popular music instead.' That intrigued me enough that I stopped on the way home to look at some popular sheet music -- and that started it all. I've been collecting ever since."

To say that Gloria Ekrom collects sheet music is as much of an understatement as saying that Jack Benny was careful about his money. Her husband constructed special shelves in their home so that Gloria could store her massive collection ("50,000, not counting duplicates"). And you'll find everything there from "Oh You Spearmint Kiddo With Those Wrigley Eyes" to the "Love Story of the Packard and the Ford". Her collection is so large that Gloria long ago catalogued it under a lengthy list of subjects and eras: religion, comic strips, finance, movies, dance, fashion, ethnic , home and marriage, advertising, automobiles, ethnic groups ... the list is endless. As you would expect, Gloria is much in demand to provide programs that frequently combine slides, piano and vocals that fit the theme of the evening. If you're interested in learning more, drop her a line c/o 3017 W. Barrett, Seattle, Washington 98199, U.S.A.

THE RAGTIME MAILBAG

Thanks to a mix-up in delivery, we received a letter and Christmas greetings months after the fact from Pat Burlow, a ragtimer and piano teacher in Kingsville, Ontario. Pat had some kind things to say about the background articles we've been carrying about people like Dick Hyman and Alexander "Ragtime" Read, and asked for more of the same. Here's a portion of Pat's letter.

These articles of yours make me recall something that I wrote to Dick Zimmerman once, and that is that Ragtimers appear to be a very caring group of people. They are almost like a big family who have great concern about their members.

If you ever get a chance, could you do an article on Max Morath? He is one of my favorites. After "The Sting", I purchased a second-hand piano after an 18-year absence from playing, and I have been working very hard since on both classics and rags. I began my search for rag records at a local store and saw Max's name listed for various records, so I bought some and loved them. I wrote him through Vanguard Records and received a very nice letter, plus a picture which I had requested. A letter later, he also sent me a big brown envelope with "Echoes of the Rosebud" and also "Alcoholic Blues" by Von Tilzer. I love both, especially the first which is by Max. Max Morath is a very nice person whom all of us, especially me, would like to know more about.

You mention a classified section re music and old records. I'm always interested in this. Trying to obtain old ragtime music is hard, especially those of Eubie's like "Lindy Hop" and "Butterfly". Also, I would like to get "Spanish Venus" by Luckey Roberts and one of Johnny Maddox's records.

EDITOR'S FOOTNOTE: If you can help Pat with the search for old music, write c/o 220 Prince Albert Street North, Kingsville, Ont. N9Y 1J7.

Our John Arpin goes to Tokyo

It doesn't seem so many years ago -- or does it -- that a child prodigy from Port McNichol, Ontario, kept coming down to Toronto and winning festivals. The same John Arpin is back to his old tricks.

When Yamaha Music sponsored an international composing competition recently, no fewer than 450 entered the competition from 39 countries. Out of that number, only 14 were chosen as finalists.

The only one selected from Canada was the Ragtime Society's president, John Arpin. Now attracting a crowd every night at the piano bar of the Windsor Arms Hotel's Club 22 in mid-Toronto, John will be flown to Tokyo by Yamaha Music for a final week of judging.

While he's there, John will perform his Lyric Suite for Piano and Strings with the Japan Philharmonic Orchestra. As a Toronto columnist with access to a Japanese-English dictionary wrote: Omedeto, Arpin-san, Seiko o inorimasu! Good luck, John!

That Railroad Rag

Words by
Nat Vincent.

Music by
Ed. Bimberg.

Allegro.

Piano.
mf
f
8va
Did you ev - er hear a - bout the
Once there was a Pull-man train of
Out in San Fran-cis - co we met
Till Ready.
mp
mp
rail - road rag,
eight - een cars,
Doc - tor Cook,
Toot, toot, toot, it's a joy - ful jag;
Took a trip and went up to Mars;
Talk-ing on the pole from an old cook book;

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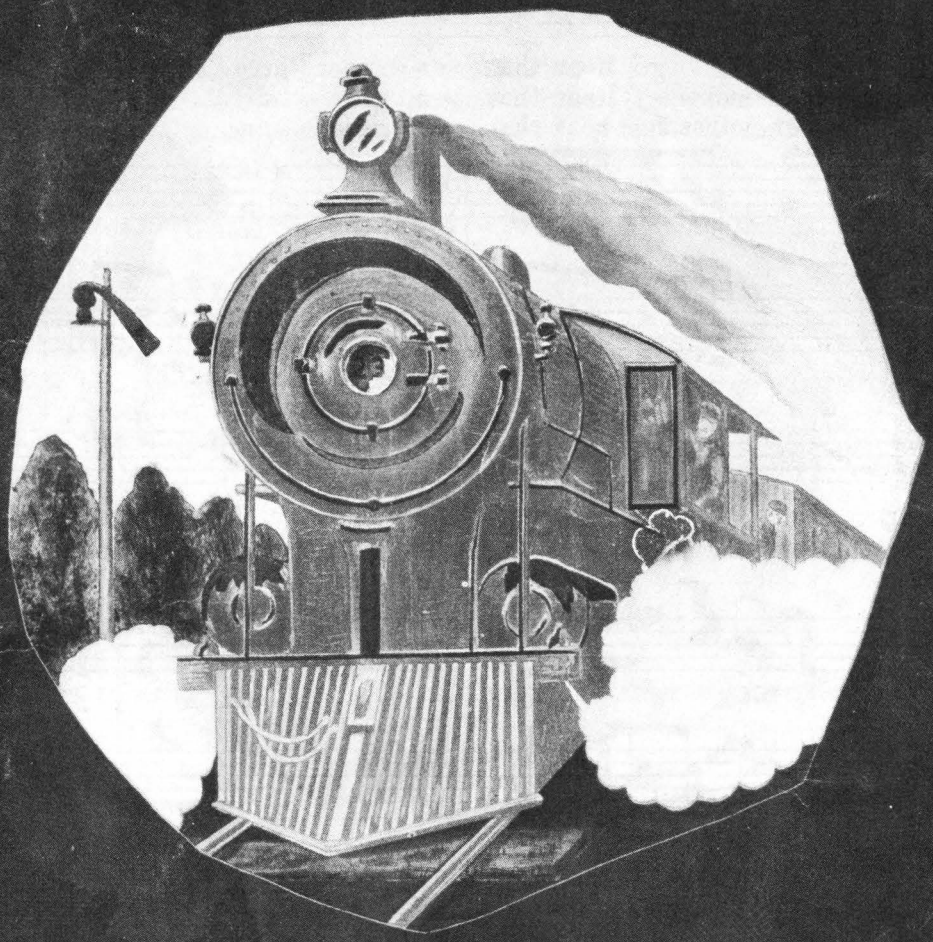
See the train a - go - ing 'round the curve, Um my! feel that
Soon it broke all rec - ords, thought I'd die, In one hour we
En - gin - eer was an - gry, said he's done, I'll go get that
en - gine swerve: En - gin - eer's a hum - ming a pe -
reached the Sky: Old St. Pe - ter was a - wait - ing
Pole, who'll come. Some one gave the sig - nal; we were
cu - liar strain, In your heart you get a pain;
at the gate, He said you're one min - ute late;
off like shot, Gee! but ev - 'ry one was hot;

All the peo - ple on the train have caught the drag, Now
Then he asked the en - gi - neer, why did you slack, I'm
In just thir - ty sec - onds we were half way there, Then
ev - 'ry - bod - y's hum - ming that rail - road rag.
sor - ry boys to tell you to go right back.
stopped to get di - rec - tions from a pol - ar bear.
Chorus.
Oh! Oh! that rail - road rag,— Oh! Oh! that
Oh! Oh! that rail - road rag,— Oh! Oh! that
Oh! Oh! that rail - road rag,— Oh! Oh! that
rail - road rag,— It's so en - tranc - ing Hon,
rail - road rag,— It's so en - tranc - ing Hon,
rail - road rag,— It's so en - tranc - ing Hon,

It makes you fall a - sleep in Far - go and you
It makes you feel so aw - ful fun - ny that you
It makes you fall in - to a doze and some - one
wake up in Chi - ca - go; Hear that en - gine hum, That train's sure
throw a - way your mon - ey; Hear that en - gine hum, That train's sure
walks off with your clothes, Just hear that en - gine hum, That train's sure
go - ing some, Here comes that Choo - choo -
go - ing some, Here comes that Choo - choo -
go - ing some, Here comes that Choo - choo -
Whistle.
1
2
Choo - choo - choo That's the rail-road rag. Oh! Oh! that rag.
Choo - choo - choo (Toot) (Toot) That's the rail-road rag. Oh! Oh! that rag.
Choo - choo - choo That's the rail-road rag. Oh! Oh! that rag.
f
8va

That Railroad Rag



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